

# IMPROVING IDENTIFICATION & DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY OF HOMELESS STUDENTS

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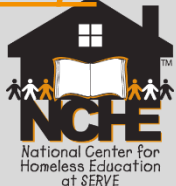


Professional Learning for  
Homeless Liaisons  
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# GET TO KNOW NCHE

- NCHE is the U.S. Department of Education's homeless education technical assistance and information center
- NCHE has
  - Comprehensive website: [www.serve.org/nche](http://www.serve.org/nche)
  - Toll-free helpline: Call 800-308-2145 or e-mail [homeless@serve.org](mailto:homeless@serve.org)
  - Listserv: visit [www.serve.org/nche/listserv.php](http://www.serve.org/nche/listserv.php) for subscription instructions
  - Free resources: [www.serve.org/nche/products.php](http://www.serve.org/nche/products.php)



# TODAY'S OBJECTIVES

- Understand LEA and liaison responsibilities to identify homeless students through increased awareness and collaboration
- Review the McKinney-Vento (MV) definition of homeless
- Gain strategies to improve the identification of homeless children and youth (HCY)

# LIAISON RESPONSIBILITIES TO IDENTIFY HOMELESS STUDENTS

- Ensure homeless children and youth (HCY) are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination with other agencies
  - Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program
  - Head Start
- Raise awareness of school personnel and service providers about the challenges of experiencing homelessness

# LIAISON RESPONSIBILITIES TO IDENTIFY HOMELESS STUDENTS

- Ensure educational rights are posted publicly in places frequented by HCY, their parents or guardians, and UHY, including schools, shelters, public libraries, & soup kitchens, in a manner and form understandable to the parents, guardians, and UHY
- Identify out-of-school homeless youth

# McKINNEY-VENTO

## DEFINITION OF HOMELESS

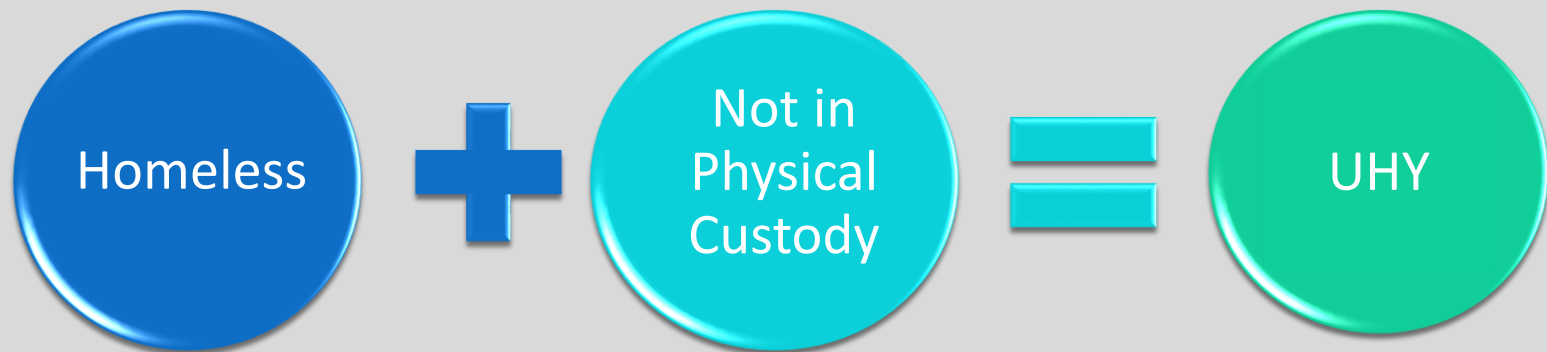
- **Lack of a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including:**
  - Sharing the housing of other persons *due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason*
  - Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds *due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations*
  - Living in emergency or transitional shelters
  - Awaiting foster care placement (will be removed from definition as of 12/10/2016)

# DEFINITION OF HOMELESS (CONT)

- Public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- Migratory children living in the circumstances described above
- Unaccompanied youth living in the circumstances described above

# UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH (UHY)

1. Student's living arrangement must meet the definition of homeless, **AND**
2. Student must be considered *unaccompanied*, defined as “not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian”



NCHE's *Unaccompanied Youth Eligibility Flowchart* <http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/toolkit2/app9a.pdf>



# THE BASICS

- Definition gives some common situations, but list is not exhaustive
- Eligibility is determined on case-by-case basis
  - Some situations are not clear-cut; require getting more info and making a judgment call
- Does living arrangement fit one of the specific examples in the law?
- Is the student's situation another type of living arrangement that is not fixed, regular, and adequate?

# FIXED, REGULAR, AND ADEQUATE

- **Fixed:** Stationary, permanent, and not subject to change
- **Regular:** Used on a predictable, routine, or consistent basis (*e.g. nightly*)
- **Adequate:** Sufficient for meeting both the physical and psychological needs typically met in home environments

*Can the student go to the SAME PLACE (fixed)  
EVERY NIGHT (regular) to sleep in  
a SAFE AND SUFFICIENT SPACE (adequate)?*

# DOUBLED-UP

- Sharing the housing of other persons *due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason*
- Questions to determine doubled up eligibility:
  - Why did the parties move in together? Crisis or mutual choice as a plan for mutual benefit?
  - Is the living arrangement intended to be permanent?
  - Where would the family/youth live if not doubling up?
  - Is the living arrangement fixed, regular, and adequate?

# SUBSTANDARD HOUSING

- Standards vary by locality
- Consider
  - Lack of utilities, e.g., water, electricity, or heat
  - Infestations of vermin or mold
  - Lack of working kitchen or toilet
  - Dangerous living conditions, e.g., inadequate flooring
  - Local or state building/housing codes
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**EHCY Non-Regulatory Guidance, A-3,**

**<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/160240ehcyguidance072716.pdf>**

# ASSESS DISTRICT PRACTICES

- Conduct needs assessment (see handout)
  - How many students, UHY, and preschool children have been identified?
  - How many children reside in homeless shelters?
  - How many are doubled-up due to lack of housing or in other kinds of eligible living situations?
  - Could there be HCY who have not been identified & are not attending school?
  - What are the data trends, and what might be the cause(s)?

# ASSESS DISTRICT PRACTICES

- Compare poverty data (e.g., percentage of students eligible for free school meals or Title I services) with percent of homeless students
- Determine staff practices when encountering possibly homeless children and youth (HCY)
  - Does the LEA use a residency questionnaire?
- Determine staff awareness of the challenges of homelessness and MV educational rights
- Other strategies?

# IMPROVE IDENTIFICATION IN SCHOOLS

- Create awareness presentations specifically for each role group or department
  - Address each role group's unique issues & concerns
  - Use data to create awareness, pinpoint barriers, & design strategies to overcome the barriers
  - Create & share a simple referral process for staff in other district programs
  - Heighten awareness of the specific needs of homeless students including UHY

# IMPROVE IDENTIFICATION IN SCHOOLS (CONT.)

- Create a list of shelter and low-cost motel addresses for registrars
- Find doubled up students by
  - Sorting student records according to address
  - Reviewing free lunch applications
- Help staff incorporate information on homelessness into the curriculum
  - Garner student help to spread the word



# IMPROVE IDENTIFICATION IN SCHOOLS (CONT.)

- Include information on the district website, district calendar, and in the student handbook
- Distribute information at enrollment fairs
- Coordinate district-wide events for National Hunger and Homeless Awareness week (November 12-20) & National Homeless Youth Awareness month (November)
- Other ideas to improve identification in schools?

# INCREASE SELF-IDENTIFICATION

- Post education rights posters where parents & youth will see them
  - Order or download free posters at <http://center.serve.org/nche/products.php>
- Increase outreach to families & UHY to help them self-identify
- Ensure families & UHY understand their rights and know they're welcome in schools
  - What strategies help create a welcoming environment for homeless families and students?

# IMPROVE IDENTIFICATION IN THE COMMUNITY

- Identify agencies that support HCY
- Ask to present at their meetings and conferences
- Provide customized awareness and training
  - Include information for the organization to share with its members and clients
- Utilize a simple school referral process
  - Consider a joint referral or a release form to allow the school and agency to contact each other for referrals

# IDENTIFY OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH

- Set up a referral process with dropout prevention and student re-engagement staff, truancy officers, SROs, and youth agencies
- Visit areas where out-of-school youth congregate and provide liaison contact info
- Include MV rights on information designed to entice out-of-school youth to re-enroll
- Use social media and public service announcements
- What other good ideas can you share?

# BEST PRACTICES

- Review NCHE's Determining Eligibility brief:  
[http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/det\\_elig.pdf](http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/det_elig.pdf)
- Use enrollment questionnaires for all students  
Samples available at  
[www.serve.org/nche/forum/eligibility.php](http://www.serve.org/nche/forum/eligibility.php)
- Discuss living arrangement in a private place
  - Be sensitive when asking additional questions
  - Avoid using the word “homeless”; instead ask about temporary or transitional situations

# BEST PRACTICES

- Do not share information about living arrangements with anyone outside LEA
  - Part of student record subject to FERPA protection
- See NCHE's *Confirming Eligibility* brief at [www.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/verif\\_II.pdf](http://www.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/verif_II.pdf)
- Re-evaluate prior homeless situations before the beginning of each school year
  - Temporary situations can become more permanent
  - No limit on how long a student is eligible
  - Reconsider school selection decision

# NCHE RESOURCES

*Homeless Liaison Toolkit: Ch. 3 Identification, Ch. 4 Eligibility, Ch. 12 Training and Awareness*

[http://center.serve.org/nche/pr/liaison\\_toolkit.php](http://center.serve.org/nche/pr/liaison_toolkit.php)

*Determining Eligibility for Rights and Services Under the McKinney-Vento Act*

[http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/determining\\_elig.pdf](http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/determining_elig.pdf)

Homeless Education General Awareness

[http://center.serve.org/nche/ibt/aw\\_homeless\\_ed.php](http://center.serve.org/nche/ibt/aw_homeless_ed.php)

